

**AGENDA MEMORANDUM
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING DIVISION**

TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Date Prepared: March 16, 2016

Date of Hearing: March 22, 2016

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Reviewed by: Jason Bradford, AICP, Planning Division Manager

Subject: The Be Brighton Comprehensive Plan

Request: Hold a public hearing and make a final determination on a major amendment to the City of Brighton Comprehensive Plan

PURPOSE:

To review, at a Public Hearing, a proposed major amendment to the Brighton Comprehensive Plan to be known as the Be Brighton Comprehensive Master Plan.

BACKGROUND:

The current Comprehensive Plan 2020 was originally adopted in 1999, and was subsequently amended by the Planning Commission in 2001, 2003, 2007 (twice), and 2009. The current plan is comprised of five sections. Section one established a vision and overall goals for the community. Section two establishes principles, and strategies for the community. Section three addresses the plan intent, maintenance and amendments to the plan. Section 4 was added upon the adoption of the South Sub-Area Plan, and addresses how the Sub Area Plan is integrated into the Comprehensive Plan, and section five provides the Plan maps.

Over the last two decades the Comprehensive Plan has served the community well and helped to guide and direct hundreds of land use application reviews, code and policy amendments, as well as direct staff in their workload priorities. For example, planning staff has worked to adopt several new zoning districts, and design standards for residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development. Key projects were developed to target downtown reinvestment while working to improve the quality of new commercial and industrial developments around town. The Historic Preservation Commission has been established and grown to support historic designations and preservation programs around town, and partnerships have worked to see the implementation of Brighton Sustainable to encourage sustainable opportunities within the community.

Since the last Comprehensive Plan update in 2009, the City has resiliently endured and recovered from the economic downturn which altered the trajectory of market trends and customer expectations. Demographic shifts in age, income and ethnicity have also altered Brighton's population in the last decade, and have left City leaders wondering if the current Plan remains consistent with the goals and vision of today's community. These combined factors led staff to recommend a major amendment to the Comprehensive Plan in order to launch a significant public engagement effort and address the altered and recovering market within and around the community. To assist staff in this process, an experienced and well-qualified consultant team was assembled to generate the plan. Logan Simpson was the primary consultant manager that worked to lead the public engagement and Plan review process; Leland Consulting Group studied the current development market including development trends expected over the next 25 years; Two Forks Collective helped to assess the unique agricultural features that surround Brighton; and Urban Interactive Studio generated and maintained a project website that kept residents well-informed about the process and provided several opportunities for participation and feedback.

PLAN PROCESS

The Be Brighton Comprehensive Plan process consisted of three phases.

Between July and August, Phase I established a foundation by gathering material, data, and research in order to get a good picture of where Brighton sits today, and ensure that the visioning process was well researched and adequately informed. Key steps during this phase included the production of factsheets about topics relevant to Brighton, branding the project and launching a project website, and setting the stage for coordination with neighboring master plans, community groups, citizens and nearby residents, and City leaders.

Phase II kicked off the visioning and opportunities process which began in August and lasted through December. This stage of the process harnessed community input received from public involvement efforts to develop the overall vision for Be Brighton, identify opportunities and big ideas, and articulate pivotal community choices and strategies. This stage was spent primarily working to educate, solicit interest and gain support of the Plan review and update with a project kick-off, hosting a booth at City events, stakeholder interviews, and boards, commission, and council presentations. Once this phase was underway, staff and our consultant team worked to provide opportunities for constructive feedback through community choice and opportunity surveys, rotating boards and displays, and meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizen Task Force (CTF). Overall, the diverse method of public engagement was vastly more successful than typical attempts to hold an open house or two. Phase II interacted with hundreds of Brighton-area residents for feedback and comments, and reached out to thousands to inform them of the process. Additional details on each type of public outreach can be found on pages 1-7 through 1-10 of the proposed Comprehensive Plan.

Phase III involved publishing draft Plan documents and maps which incorporated on an ongoing basis the feedback obtained through the public engagement process. Significant steps were taken to vet out draft policies with the engaged public, City staff, and City leaders who would be using and monitoring the Plan. The draft Plan was posted on the project website, displayed at key locations throughout the City, marketed on Facebook, discussed in open house meetings, and

referred out to every external and internal agency that participates in the development review process.

THE BE BRIGHTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Vision and Foundation

The first phase of the project was for staff to establish a baseline with community comments, ideas and interests about the area. Our consultant team did this by drafting some initial fact sheet summaries that presented major opportunities and constraints surrounding the area. Summaries were drafted around the topics of Heritage, Agricultural Assets, Residents & Housing Options, Workforce and Job Opportunities, and Development Patterns. Through public comment and discussion, these summaries were revised on an ongoing basis and eventually incorporated into Chapter 2 of the Plan. A market study was conducted during this time to also help staff and the consultant understand what development trends can be expected in the future, and the full study is attached as Appendix A.

Through conversations held at the neighborhood meetings, City events, and presentations, four themes stood out among the feedback which generated a vision for the community. The four vision themes are:

1. The Regional Leader for the Northeast Metro Area
2. Inclusive Community Where We Collaborate and Share
3. A Sustainable and Complete Community
4. A Future Rooted and Growing in a Shared Heritage and Home Town Feel

Land use ideas were generated around these four themes and shared with the community in further public surveys to obtain constructive feedback. Staff and the consultant team used this process to remove unsupported ideas, and keep and refine ideas that the community supported. Overall, staff found that the fourth theme was the most supported as people truly identified Brighton with its agricultural and historic assets that surrounding areas may lack. A full copy of the survey results is attached as Appendix B to the Plan, and the four vision themes can be found on pages 3-2 and 3-3 of the Plan.

Future Land Use Map & Categories

Key to any Comprehensive Plan is the Future Land Use Map, which is an advisory tool that helps staff and the Planning Commission to evaluate development proposals, provides land owners with guidance on recommended land uses that are envisioned and encouraged for the area, and to assist in the orderly and efficient development of the community as a whole. A majority of the land use map changes from the current Plan to the Be Brighton update, are recommended to accurately reflect actual land use and development approvals that have occurred in Brighton since the last Plan update. In addition, the new map has been shifted into GIS software which allows the land uses to be displayed on a parcel level, making the map significantly more detailed than previous versions. In addition to the map updates, significant revisions were made to the Land Use Categories by updating them and adding more helpful descriptions to each of the categories. Taking the Brighton-Ft. Lupton Energy Corridor as an example, staff received feedback about working to improve design quality and increasing commercial options in industrial areas along US 85. Therefore, in the updated Plan staff proposes to split the previous “Employment” land use category to create Employment Industrial

and Employment Commercial categories. The Future Land Use Plan Map was then revised to reflect the recommendation that Employment Industrial areas (which often include outdoor storage and other intense uses) are perhaps more appropriate east of Main Street, and that Employment Commercial areas could be located along the Highway 85 corridor. The Future Land Use Plan Map and related descriptions can be found on pages 3-4 through 3-16. *Note: As a reminder, this map and the descriptions contained within are advisory, guiding documents for City-wide application, and do not affect zoning for any specific property. As with previous versions of the Comprehensive Plan, all zoning applications are considered through the established public hearing process.*

Opportunity Area Policies

Early in the planning process, citizens identified a number of specific opportunities that could help achieve the community vision. This feedback was then translated into policies and strategies that staff might further pursue, in order to help realize the community vision for each of these areas. The Plan includes 20 opportunity areas overall, and they are grouped together by each major land use category. Notice that these are very similar to the planning area policies outlined in the current 2020 Comprehensive Plan. Because of their similarity, staff has removed the planning area policies to prevent redundancy and because the planning areas often applied to character traits that did not always cover the entire planning area. The Opportunity Area Policies are listed on pages 3-17 through 3-29 of the draft Plan.

Development Program

At the end of Chapter 3, pages 3-30 through 3-32 layout the relationship between the expected market demands and development trends (extracted from the market study, Appendix A), and the opportunity areas intended to absorb and be impacted by new construction. This table helps to demonstrate the amount of development that the City might expect to see each decade by category, and provides guidance on how the City might work to direct redevelopment to other areas preferred by the community. While market conditions vary from year to year, market trends are an important consideration in the land use planning process.

City-Wide Principles, Policies & Strategies

While the opportunity area policies were drafted to address specific areas of change, it is recommended that the City should also consider policies addressing development of the community as a whole. This set of principles, policies and strategies are drafted to be comprehensive of not only the community vision, but to plan for a sustainable, inclusive and complete city. Unlike the planning area policies which were removed from the Plan, staff worked with the current City-wide Comprehensive Plan policies and made modifications by eliminating redundancy, combining topics, and updating them to align with the updated vision and current market conditions. This process included an audit of the old policies by staff and the Planning Commission, a review by the CTF and TAC, and several meetings with stakeholders and internal departments to update the proposed policies. The result is a new list of the following ten Principles:

1. Managing Growth: Manage Growth Through New Private Sector Development and New Public Infrastructure to Proactively and Equitably to Further this Plan's Stated Vision
2. The Freestanding City: Strengthen the Vitality of Brighton as a Freestanding Community with an Appropriate Balance between Residential and Non-Residential Uses

3. Open Space and Natural Environment: Create Identity and Distinctiveness with Systematic and Large Areas of Open Space that Highlight the City's Natural Resources and Agricultural Connection
4. Multimodal Transportation Principle: Support Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility and the Viability of High-Frequency Transit to Reduce Automobile Dependency Through Land Use Planning and Design
5. Economically Vibrant Community: Create and Economically Vibrant Community
6. Distinctive Neighborhoods: Promote Neighborhoods That Have Distinctiveness and Character
7. Community Design: Place a High Priority on Sustainable and High-Quality Design that is Compatible with the City's Unique Character
8. Redevelopment: Promote Redevelopment of Outdated or Incompatible Land Uses and Buildings
9. Recreation and Tourism: Develop a Dynamic, Regionally Competitive, and Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Based Industry
10. Historic Resources: Preserve Historic Resources to Enhance the Community's Quality of Life and Heritage

A set of policies and strategies has been grouped under each principle to provide further direction and guidance to citizens, City staff, leaders and the development community. Chapter four in its entirety consists of the City-wide principles, policies, and strategies, which can be found on pages 4-1 through 4-30.

Plan Implementation and Maintenance

As the City grows and public engagement increases, residents often demonstrate increased expectations for government transparency and consistency. Moreover, a community growing and recovering from a sudden economic downturn can quickly shift and change as new opportunities arise. Therefore, the Plan has been drafted to list seven ways that partnerships and resources might work to implement the Plan. Additionally, criteria for amending the plan (annual reviews, and updates on a 5 and 10 year basis) are included to keep the Plan current and up to date. Lastly, Plan indicators have been formulated to for staff to monitor and measure the success and effectiveness of the Plan.

REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC DRAFT

In addition to the multiple opportunities for community engagement and ongoing feedback during the drafting process, an additional referral process was provided to review the draft Plan. This review included a public posting of the draft Plan on the project website, an open house to review maps and text, a referral review process involving all internal and external department and agency contacts, and corresponding marketing and outreach including Facebook posts, poster boards, and sign postings, to invite and encourage public participation. Below are a few examples of comments received and staff's responses.

Internal Referral Agency Comments

Staff met one-on-one with the internal City departments which will be most impacted by the proposed Plan to discuss the draft policies and further refine the policies and strategies contained within. While

only a few written comments were provided to staff, an opportunity to comment was provided to all City Departments including specifically all members of the Development Review Committee (DRC).

External Referral Agency Comments

City of Commerce City: Comments question the use of DRCOG principles as they relate to the freestanding city and urban center designations. Staff spoke with DRCOG to clarify that the proposed policies do not conflict with the current adopted metro vision plan, or with the purpose of urban centers as defined through DRCOG. A second comment was made requesting coordination of transportation adjacent to Commerce City. This comment is more applicable to the Transportation Master Plan, but coordination is generally addressed in the plan implementation section that addresses partnerships and coordination with surrounding communities.

City of Thornton: Comments dispute the urban growth boundary demonstrated along the west side of Brighton's growth management area. Staff verified the minor change and corrected the maps to address the comment received.

Weld County: One comment was received encouraging staff to share the Comprehensive Plan information with those outside of city limits. As previously mentioned the City has made significant effort to engage the general public throughout the process with the project website, newspaper articles, Facebook posts, open houses and other City events (which are often attended by surrounding county residents).

The Tri-County Health Department: A variety of comments were provided in support of the health related principles, policies, and goals integrated throughout the plan. A few minor revisions and points of clarification were suggested and where applicable have been incorporated in the proposed Plan.

The Farmers Reservoir and Irrigation Company (FRICO): This is a ditch company with property rights located in various areas within Brighton who commented with concern about policies encouraging trails and pedestrian use of ditch and other drainage areas. With the assistance of the Utilities Department, a strategy has been added to clarify that proper coordination with applicable ditch companies should occur prior to the design and construction of trails near ditch company jurisdiction.

E-470 Public Highway Authority: A comment letter was received which thanks staff for referring the Plan, but that they have no comments to provide.

Citizen Comments

The only public comment received by staff as of March 18, 2016 was received via email dated February 29th from Ms. Stacie Nelson. Ms. Nelson expressed frustration over the limited diversity of restaurants and food services within town, as well as a question about the expansion of the Oasis water park.

Staff Response: While these questions are not within the purview of the Comprehensive Plan, a policy within the Economically Vibrant Community Principle 5 addresses targeting business which the current market does not support, and further supporting new business within the community. Secondly, expansion of the Oasis water park is the role and function of the Parks and Recreation Department and is outside of the scope of this plan. However, Policy 9.4 addresses the need to "Continue and strengthen the parks and recreation programs as these are clear quality of life enhancements that make the City appealing to both existing and new residents and new businesses."

Adoption Draft (Revisions to the Public Draft)

On an ongoing and regular basis, changes were made to the public draft of the Plan in order to prepare the Adoption draft that is before the Commission. The revisions were made in response to various comments either received in writing, in person during the public open house discussions, and for further refinement and clarification by staff and City leaders (Boards, Commissions, and Council). Small grammatical edits, or points of clarification were added to nearly every page in the last three chapters (principles and policies). However, the major changes are as follows:

- Chapter 4 and 3 were switched. Staff found that the opportunity area policies related more to the community vision process and wanted to bring them together. Additionally, the Future Land Use Map is generally the most used portion of the plan and helps to set-up the city-wide policies which are now in chapter 4.
- Pg. 3-5: The Future Land Use Map has been revised to include the new Land Use Categories, and to reflect changes made through the public draft review of the local district plan.
- Pg. 3-6 through 3-16: Formatting changes, text changes, and clarification has been added to nearly all of the Land Use Categories in order to make them more useful and clear for staff and the development community.
- Pg. 3-18 through 3-29: Map keys have been added to each of the opportunity areas to help reference their location. Minor text changes have also been made to most of the policies to help clarify their intent and further define the vision for the area.
- Pg. 4-2, 4-3: A summary table has been inserted to help quickly reference each principle and policy contained in the city-wide principles.
- Pg. 4-4 through 4-30: Text for city-wide principles, policies, and strategies have been revised to further clarify questions that have arisen during the process from City staff, public comments, citizen task force members, and city leadership. As a whole, the ten principles in the public draft have remained the same, and none have been deleted or added as a result of the public review. *Note: tracked changes are available for this chapter, and are available upon request.*
- Pg. 5-7 through 5-9: Table 5-1 Plan Indicators has been filled in with goals and source information so that it can be initiated by staff if the Plan is adopted by the Commission.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

PLANNING COMMISSION AUTHORITY

It is the duty of the Planning Commission to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the territory within the municipal boundaries, including areas outside its boundaries that bear relation to the planning of the municipality. The Planning Commission is required to develop a master plan for the general purpose of "guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs which will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote the health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare" of the citizens. In preparing a master plan, the Planning Commission should "make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present

conditions and future growth of the municipality, with due regard to its relation to neighboring territory." (CRS 31-23-206 and -207)

Furthermore, section 17-8-20(b)(5) of the Brighton Municipal Code states that "The Planning Commission shall have final decision jurisdiction over...The Comprehensive Plan, amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, master plans and master plan amendments..."

THE PURPOSE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Comprehensive planning is very much related to the economic prosperity of a community. A comprehensive plan is one of the fundamental tools in planning the future growth of a local community. Most importantly, a comprehensive plan addresses the constant change and evolution of a community. Comprehensive plans are sometimes referred to as master plans or land use plans—they often deal with issues related to the appropriate uses of land. In many cases, comprehensive plans might address compatibility issues between various uses of land, management and preservation of natural resources, identification and preservation of historically significant lands and structures, and adequate planning for infrastructure needs. Further, comprehensive plans help guide the location and development of schools, recreational areas, employment centers and housing.

ELEMENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan is intended to reflect a vision of what a community would like to become in the future. Therefore, the process of developing this Plan was and is a community-wide effort. All interested groups were encouraged and invited to play a part in delineating this vision. Specific goals and objectives were developed along with a time frame for implementation. The contents of a comprehensive plan can vary from community to community, but in most cases, a plan typically consists of the following elements:

1. Land Use (both existing and future),
2. Demographics (existing and projected),
3. Housing,
4. Natural Resources,
5. Economics,
6. Recreation and Tourism, and
7. Education.

Throughout the planning process staff and the consultant team have strived to include and engage the Brighton community. So much so, that most if not all of the updated content of the Plan was actually derived from public feedback. The above-referenced elements are addressed by the proposed Plan in the following ways:

1. Land Use: Existing uses are addressed in the Development Pattern factsheet on pages 2-10 and 2-11. Future Land Uses are addressed throughout the Plan and more specifically within the Future Land Use Plan Map and Land Use Categories on pages 3-4 through 3-16.
2. Demographics: Existing demographics are addressed with the Residents and Housing Options and Workforce and Job Opportunities factsheets on pages 2-6 through 2-9. Future demographics were studied via the market study in Appendix A and integrated into the Plan as recommendations for future land uses and policies. For example, the increasing number of senior population drives a higher

need for housing-type diversity, which is addressed in the Distinctive Neighborhoods and Community Design Principles.

3. Housing: Housing is addressed in Opportunity Areas Policies 1-7, as well as the Managing Growth, Freestanding City, Distinctive Neighborhoods, Community Design, and Historic Resources Principles.
4. Natural Resources: The Managing Growth, Freestanding City, Open Space and Natural Environment, Recreation and Tourism, and Historic Resources Principles all address the natural resources in and around Brighton. Opportunity Area Policies 18-20 additionally address guidance on natural resources.
5. Economics: The market study located in Appendix A addresses the economic market conditions today and in the future. The market study was used to balance all of the policies and principles within the Plan. However, they are specifically incorporated into the Development Program on page 3-32, as well as the Managing Growth, Economically Vibrant Community, and Recreation and Tourism Principles.
6. Recreation: The Open Space and Natural Environment and Recreation and Tourism principles address City-wide goals for recreation, and Opportunity Area Policies 18-20 demonstrate additional community-desired opportunities for increasing recreation amenities within and around Brighton.
7. Education: The Managing Growth and Community Design Principles address supporting educational needs as development occurs.

REVIEW CRITERIA

A comprehensive plan document should fulfill five basic requirements:

1. It should be comprehensive. The proposed Plan is not limited to community development responsibilities such as current development applications, and land the Land Use and Development Code, but also include city-wide activity such as infrastructure development, parks and open space, business development, etc.
2. It should be long-range. Studies and policies proposed in this plan reach out to 2040 and beyond. Extending the vision time-frame is recommended, because the current Plan was only drafted to look through 2020 and dramatic shifts in the market and Brighton population trends should be addressed and incorporated.
3. It should be general. The Plan is advisory and should be used to help guide land use planning and development review decisions. All proposed land use and development review must follow established procedures according to law, and a Comprehensive Plan should provide assistance and guidance, while at the same time being flexible enough to adjust to unforeseen changes and conditions as the City grows and develops.
4. It should focus on physical development. Development of Brighton's physical environment has been incorporated throughout all of the Plan maps and policies contained within.
5. It should relate physical design proposals to community goals and social and economic policies. The community engagement and visioning process, as well as initial market study have been included in this process and results have been integrated throughout the Plan text.

FINDINGS:

In summary, staff finds that the Planning Commission has the authority and responsibility to adopt master plans of the community through powers vested by the Colorado State Statutes and the City of Brighton Land Use and Development Code. Staff additionally finds that the proposed Plan contains all of the elements of a comprehensive plan and fulfills the purpose of a comprehensive plan by including an extensive public engagement process and translating the community goals into land use policies. Therefore, staff has drafted a Resolution of approval for the Planning Commission's consideration. In order to eliminate any minor spelling or grammatical errors in the final draft, staff requests the authorization to make minor corrections to the Plan which are not substantive or content based.

OPTIONS FOR THE COMMISSION'S CONSIDERATION:

- Approve the Resolution as drafted,
- Approve the Resolution with specific conditions or changes to the Plan,
- Continue the public hearing to a later date certain, or
- Direct staff to draft a Resolution of denial with specific facts and findings for the denial.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Draft Resolution (w/out exhibits)
- Agency and Public Comment Response Letters
- The proposed Be Brighton Comprehensive Plan (Adoption Draft – March 2016, bound)